

Message Text

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45

ACTION SCI-06

INFO OCT-01 ARA-16 EUR-25 NEA-14 IO-14 ISO-00 FEA-02 DRC-01

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7456

INFO AEC GERMANTOWN

US MISSION IAEA VIENNA 79

US MISSION GENEVA 330

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

UNCLAS BUENOS AIRES 5553

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TECH, PARM, AR.

SUBJECT: ARGENTINE NUCLEAR PROGRAM.

REF: (A) BUENOS AIRES 5165; (B) IAEA VIENNA 6279; (C) BUENOS
AIRES 4815.

1. SUMMARY. ARGENTINE CNEA PRESIDENT IRAOLAGOITIA AND OTHER
CNEA OFFICIALS HAVE ANSWERED SOME RATHER STRAIGHTFORWARD
QUESTIONS ON ARGENTINE NUCLEAR INTENTIONS IN A MAGAZINE ARTICLE
JUST PUBLISHED HERE. THEY HAVE STATED FLATLY THAT ARGENTINA
IS NOT NOW WORKING ON AN ATOMIC BOMB AND ALSO THAT THERE ARE
NO "CLOSED DOORS" AT CNEA INSTALLATIONS. THEY INDICATED A
BELIEF THAT ARGENTINA WAS IN "TECHNICAL CONDITIONS" TO CONSTRUCT
AN A-BOMB AND DID NOT RULE THIS OUT IN THE FUTURE IN ANSWERING
THESE QUESTIONS. END SUMMARY.

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2. "GENTE" MAGAZINE OF JULY 25 REPORTS RESULTS OF AN INTERVIEW

WITH CNEA PRESIDENT IRAOLAGOITIA; R& D DIRECTOR PEREZ FERREIRA,
AND ADVISOR CRESPI.

3. IN REPLY TO QUESTION RELATED TO PRESS STORIES AS TO WHETHER ARGENTINA "IN THIS MOMENT" IS WORKING TO OBTAIN AN ATOMIC BOMB, REPLY WAS "I SHOULD EMPHASIZE THAT THE CNEA IS NOT WORKING IN THIS MOMENT ON ANYTHING WHICH HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE MILITARY ASPECT OF THE PROBLEM. THAT IS TO SAY, THE FABRICATION OF THE BOMB IN THIS MOMENT MAKES NO SENSE."

4. IN REPLY TO A QUESTION ABOUT THE COST OF AN ATOMIC BOMB, THE CNEA OFFICIALS REFERRED TO A 1968 UN REPORT WHICH ESTIMATED, AT THAT TIME, THAT TO MAKE 100 PLUTONIUM BOMBS PLUS BOMBERS AND MISSILES TO TRANSPORT THEM WOULD REQUIRE AN INVESTMENT OF \$ 2 BILLION AND 10-YEAR PERIOD TO ACCOMPLISH THIS.

5. WHEN ASKED IF THERE WERE OTHER LATAM COUNTRIES WORKING ON ATOMIC BOMBS, THE ANSWER WAS "NO. IF ARGENTINA, WHICH IS THE COUNTRY WITH MOST EXPERIENCE IN THE NUCLEAR ENERGY FIELD IN LATIN AMERICA, DOES NOT CONTEMPLATE THAT PROJECT, OBVIOUSLY THE OTHERS ARE ALSO NOT IN A CONDITION TO DO SO."

6. WITH REGARD TO THE ARGENTINA-INDIA BILATERAL, THE REPLY WAS "THAT AGREEMENT - A COPY OF WHICH I SENT TO THE INTERNATIONAL AGENCY OF VIENNA SO THAT ALL THE MEMBER STATES WOULD UNDERSTAND IT - HAS NO CLAUSE OF A MILITARY NATURE: EVERYTHING REFERS TO COOPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USE OF NUCLEAR ENERGY. THAT IS, THAT IT SHOULD NOT PREJUDICE US BECAUSE IT IS SOMETHING COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT OF THAT WHICH IS PRETENDED BY PUBLICATIONS WHICH HAVE RECENTLY APPEARED."

7. AFTER A COMMENT THAT, NOTWITHSTANDING DECLARATIONS OF PEACEFUL USES, INDIA HAD A MILITARY DEPARTMENT IN A SPECIFIC PLACE; A SECRET PLACE INTO WHICH IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO ENTER; AN AREA ENCIRCLED BY MAXIMUM SECURITY. HERE NOBODY CAN SAY THAT HE PASSED THROUGH THE INSTALLATIONS OF THE ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION AND FOUND A CLOSED DOOR; HERE ALL THE DOORS ARE OPEN, AND THAT AUTOMATICALLY DISPROVES THE PROBLEM.

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8. FINALLY, IRAOLAGOITIA WAS ASKED IF ARGENTINA WAS IN "TECHNICAL CONDITIONS" TO CONSTRUCT AN A-BOMB. HE REPLIED, "YES. ALTHOUGH WE WOULD HAVE TO WORK FOR A GOOD PERIOD OF TIME TO PREPARE OURSELVES. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A DEVICE OF THAT CALIBER SIGNIFIES, EFFORTS, KNOWLEDGE, AND INVESTMENTS OF A LARGE MAGNITUDE. THAT IS TO SAY, FOR NOW WE DO NOT PROPOSE TO MAKE THE BOMB, AND, IF WE WOULD PROPOSE IT, IT WOULD NOT BE AN IMMEDIATE AFFAIR. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS SIMPLER TO CONSTRUCT A BOMB THAN A

REACTOR."

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